Veterans Affairs Canada | Anciens Combattants Canada

Report on Plans and Priorities

2013–14

The Honourable Steven Blaney, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Veterans Affairs

Canada

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Minister's Message

It is an honour and a privilege to serve those who have served our country so well—Canada's Veterans and the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces. As highlighted in this *Report on Plans and Priorities*, we will continue to make changes within the Department to provide better and faster service and to provide Veterans and their families with the support they need, when they need it.

Assisting Veterans as they make the transition to civilian life is extremely important as we serve more modern-day Veterans. We are now in the midst of implementing and expanding on the Veterans Transition Action Plan so that Veterans and Canadian Armed Forces personnel can realize the most rewarding and satisfying lives possible when their military service comes to an end. The five major elements of the Veterans Transition Action Plan are as follows:

- Through our **Cutting Red Tape initiative** we are simplifying forms, using plain language and providing Veterans and their families with up-front payments for grounds maintenance and housekeeping services offered under the Veterans Independence Program (VIP). It also includes a full suite of e-services, such as the *Veterans Benefits Browser*, *My VAC Account* and *My VAC Book*, that put important information at the fingertips of Veterans and their families.
- Through strong partnerships, both inside and outside of government, we are expanding and **improving service to Veterans**. For example, our partnership with Service Canada provides Veterans with access to over 600 points of service across the country. We also are funding an innovative program with the University of British Columbia for group-based therapy for Veterans across the country.
- Veterans have told us that finding a meaningful career is often the key to making a successful transition to civilian life. That's why we are **working with businesses and organizations across Canada to help connect Veterans with good paying, high quality jobs** and to eliminate barriers to hiring. For example, the Canadian National Railway Company (CN) expects to have 2,000 positions available to Veterans in the coming year and Helmets to Hardhats Canada is connecting Veterans with careers in construction and trades. To further facilitate a successful transition, the True Patriot Love Foundation is leading the Veterans Transition Advisory Council, which will guide the Department and the private sector in this area.
- We are determined in our efforts to **educate the Department's employees on Canada's military culture and traditions**. Through outreach and engagement with the Canadian Armed Forces and various internal awareness projects, we are making sure that our staff and Veterans are speaking the same language.

It is also important to highlight the significant role of commemoration within the Department to honour the sacrifices and achievements of all Canadian men and women who have served so bravely. Of particular note, I recently announced 2013 as the Year of the Korean War Veteran as we mark the 60th anniversary of the Korean Armistice. There is also work underway in preparing for the 100th anniversary of the First World War and the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

In closing, we are doing the very things our Veterans have been telling us they want, and we are proud to be delivering. Whether through the New Veterans Charter or the Veterans Transition Action Plan, we remain firmly committed to providing Veterans and their families with the support they need, when they need it.

The Honourable Steven Blaney, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Veterans Affairs

Section I: Organizational Overview

This section provides high-level information on the Veterans Affairs Portfolio.

Raison d'être

Canada's development as an independent country with a unique identity stems partly from its achievements in times of war. Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) exists to assist and help those whose courageous efforts gave us this legacy and contributed to our growth as a nation.

VAC's mandate is set out in the *Department of Veterans Affairs Act*[i]. It charges the Minister of Veterans Affairs with responsibility for "the care, treatment, or re-establishment in civil life of any person who served in the Canadian Forces or Merchant Navy or in the naval, army, air forces or merchant navies of Her Majesty, of any person who has otherwise engaged in pursuits relating to war, and of any other person designated . . . and the care of the dependants or survivors of any person referred to." Through an Order-in-Council, VAC has responsibility for keeping alive the achievements and sacrifices of those who served Canada in times of war and peace.

Responsibilities

Veterans Affairs Canada

Veterans Affairs Canada achieves its mandate by providing services and benefits that respond to the needs of Veterans, other individuals and their families.

VAC has three main roles:

Provider of disability compensation and financial support: VAC administers programs which recognize and compensate for the disabling effects of service-related disabilities. The Department also provides financial support and assistance when career-ending or service-related disabilities affect one's ability to earn income.

Funder for health care and re-establishment services: the Department works with other levels of government—federal, provincial and territorial—to provide access to health programs that enhance the well-being of Veterans and other eligible individuals, promote independence and ensure continued care. The Department also provides support to Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Veterans and their families to ease their transition to civilian life.

Catalyst for national and international remembrance: the Department keeps alive the achievements and sacrifices of those who served Canada in times of war, military conflict and peace, and promotes the importance of these efforts on Canadian life as we know it today. VAC fosters remembrance of the contributions made by Canada's war dead and Veterans through its Canada Remembers Program[ii]. It also maintains and operates 14 memorial sites in Europe.

Veterans Ombudsman

The Office of the Veterans Ombudsman helps Veterans, men and women in uniform of the Canadian Armed Forces, members and former members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), as well as families and other individuals, address concerns related to VAC and the *Veterans Bill of Rights*[iii]. As an impartial and independent officer, the Veterans Ombudsman reports directly to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and works to ensure that Veterans, their representatives and their families are treated fairly.

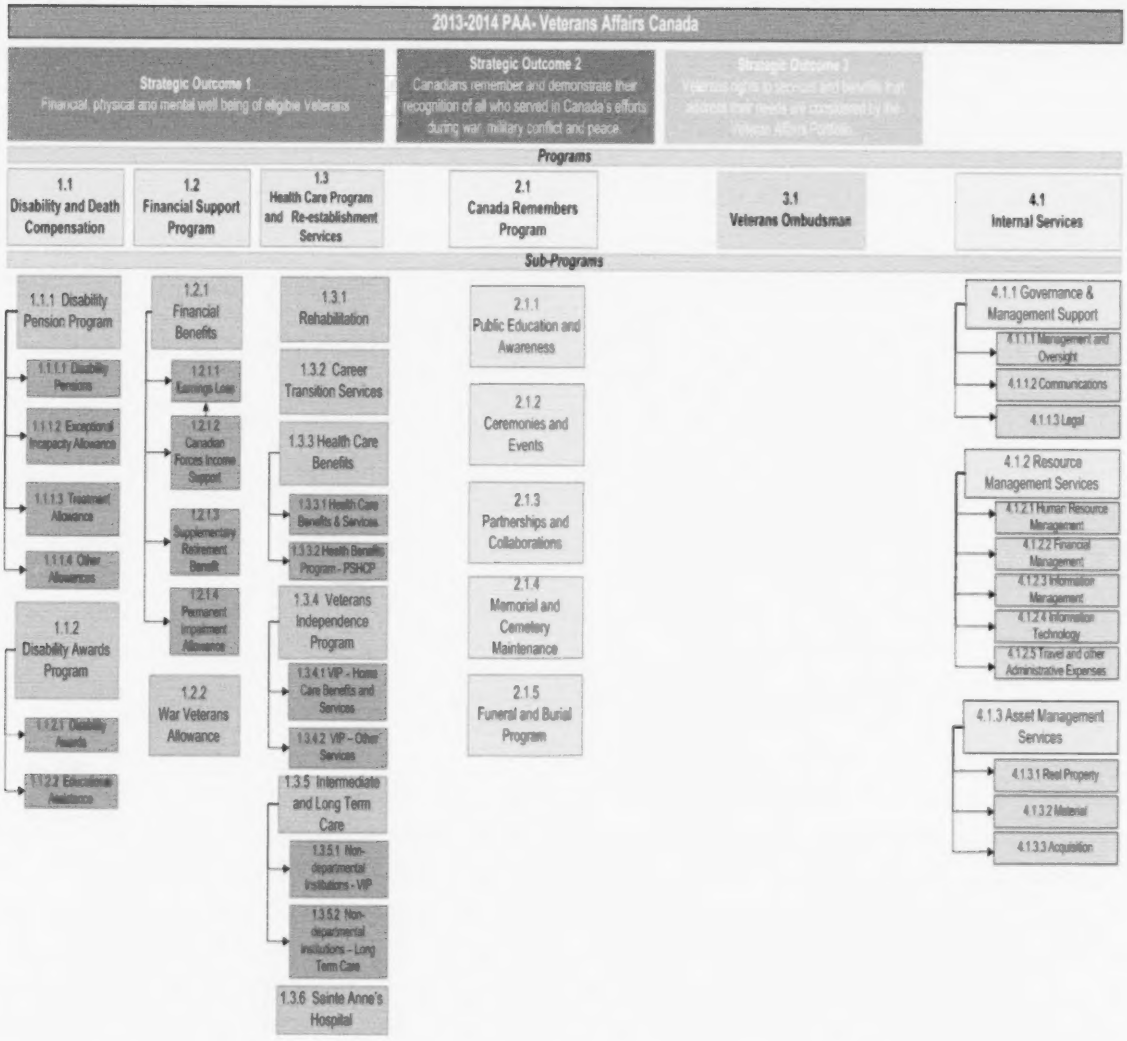
What Veterans Affairs Canada Does

Parliamentarians and Canadians firmly believe that Canada should support the men and women who put their lives at risk defending this country and its values. Accordingly, VAC provides services to well over 200,000 people: Veterans, men and women in uniform of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), their families, and others. The Department's social and financial programs include disability benefits, allowances, pension advocacy, health care, and commemoration. These programs are intended to recognize the sacrifices of Veterans during times of war and conflict, and to compensate them for the various hardships they suffer—such as physical or emotional disabilities, or lost economic opportunities. VAC also provides a number of innovative health and social services, and legal assistance.

The Department serves a highly diverse population that reflects the remarkable breadth of Canada's contributions to world peace. VAC's mission is to make sure that its services and benefits respond effectively to the needs of Veterans, their families, and others VAC serves. Another goal is commemoration: recognizing Veterans' services to this country, and keeping alive the memory of their achievements and sacrifices for all Canadians.

Program Alignment Architecture

Veterans Affairs Canada works to achieve three strategic outcomes (SOs). The following chart outlines these strategic outcomes as well as the program and sub-activities that flow from them.


2013-2014 PAA- Veterans Affairs Canada
Strategic Outcome 1
Financial, physical and mental well being of eligible Veterans
Strategic Outcome 2
Canadians remember and demonstrate their recognition of all who served in Canada's efforts during war, military conflict and peace
Strategic Outcome 3
Programs
1.1 Disability and Death Compensation
1.2 Financial Support Program
1.3 Health Care Program and Re-establishment Services
2.1 Canada Remembers Program
3.1 Veterans Ombudsman
4.1 Internal Services
Sub-Programs
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1.1.1.1 Disability Pensions
1.1.1.2 Exceptional Incapacity Allowance
1.1.1.3 Treatment Allowance
1.1.1.4 Other Allowances
1.1.2 Disability Awards Program
1.1.2.1 Disability Awards
1.1.2.2 Educational Assistance
1.2.1 Financial Benefits
1.2.1.1 Earnings Loss
1.2.1.2 Canadian Forces Income Support
1.2.1.3 Supplementary Retirement Benefit
1.2.1.4 Permanent Impairment Allowance
1.2.2 War Veterans Allowance
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1.3.2 Career Transition Services
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1.3.5 Intermediate and Long Term Care
1.3.5.1 Non-departmental Institutions - VIP
1.3.5.2 Non-departmental Institutions - Long Term Care
1.3.6 Sainte Anne's Hospital
2.1.1 Public Education and Awareness
2.1.2 Ceremonies and Events
2.1.3 Partnerships and Collaborations
2.1.4 Memorial and Cemetery Maintenance
2.1.5 Funeral and Burial Program
4.1.1 Governance & Management Support
4.1.1.1 Management and Oversight
4.1.1.2 Communications
4.1.1.3 Legal
4.1.2 Resource Management Services
4.1.2.1 Human Resource Management
4.1.2.2 Financial Management
4.1.2.3 Information Management
4.1.2.4 Information Technology
4.1.2.5 Travel and other Administrative Expenses
4.1.3 Asset Management Services
4.1.3.1 Real Property
4.1.3.2 Material
4.1.3.3 Acquisition

Organizational Priorities

This section provides an overview of the Department's priorities in 2013–2014. The list focuses on the strategic activities that are most crucial, at this time, to VAC's success.

Veterans Affairs Canada

Modernization of the Department	**Previously Committed in 2012–2013**
Contributing to: All strategic outcomes and program activities	**Why is this a priority?** The need to modernize VAC is the result of demographic change. The group the Department has traditionally served—Veterans of the Second World War and the Korean War—is declining, while the number of Canadian Armed Forces Veterans is rising. Modern-day Veterans tend to have more complex needs and this challenges the Department to improve its performance to meet their higher expectations. Work has been and will be ongoing to cut bureaucratic red tape and provide a hassle-free environment for Veterans, their families and others looking for help from Veterans Affairs Canada. **How VAC plans to meet this priority** 〉 Implementing new tools and technologies to improve efficiency, and to meet the changing needs of the people VAC serves. 〉 Re-engineering the Department to improve operational efficiencies, and refocus on core business. 〉 In order to improve efficiency, VAC will modernize internal services. 〉 Implementing a standard process for developing and reviewing program policies, to simplify the cycle and keep it up-to-date. 〉 Improving integration of the internal structure of the Department to improve efficiency and responsiveness. 〉 Supporting broader government initiatives designed to modernize and improve the public service. 〉 Increasing the use of technology to replace paper-based processes. 〉 Using mobile technology to allow VAC to deliver real-time services.

Improving Service Delivery	**Ongoing since 2011**
Contributing to: Strategic Outcome 1 PA(s) ▪ Disability and Death Compensation ▪ Financial Support Program ▪ Health Care Program and Re-establishment Services	**Why is this a priority?** To fully respond to the diverse and changing needs of Veterans and their families, VAC must continue to revitalize and streamline itself. Its goal will be to provide fast and easy access to benefits and services, and to help the people it serves make a seamless transition from military life to civilian life. The Department will offer professional services, provided by capable staff members who understand military culture. VAC will continue cutting bureaucratic red tape to make policies and programs less complicated and access to services easier.

	How VAC plans to meet this priority 〉 Continuing to work with the CAF to integrate policy, improve shared forecasting, align support services, and increase VAC's awareness of the CAF culture. 〉 Increasing ease of access to information about VAC's programs and services. 〉 Introducing new and improved standards for delivering services. 〉 Implementing ongoing training initiatives for staff through the National Case Management Learning Program. 〉 Implement the new calculation to cease the disability pension offset from the Earnings Loss Benefit and the Canadian Forces Income Support Benefit. 〉 While continuing to ensure quality and speed, will streamline decision-making. 〉 Expanding the use of technology to deliver benefits and services. 〉 Establishing partnerships with the private and public sectors, such as the Veterans Transition Advisory Council. 〉 Updating the mental health strategy. 〉 Developing a strategy to better support Veterans' families. 〉 Expanding services for Veterans with operational stress injuries through the introduction of mobile applications.

Transferring Ste. Anne's Hospital	**Ongoing since 2009**
Contributing to: Strategic Outcome 1 PA(s) ▪ Health Care Program and Re-establishment Services	**Why is this a priority?** It has been a long-standing policy of the Government of Canada to transfer hospitals to the provinces, thereby respecting provincial jurisdiction in matters of heath care. Ste. Anne's Hospital is the last remaining federally owned Veterans hospital. Transferring this institution to the Government of Quebec would offer a number of benefits: it would take advantage of Ste. Anne's expertise in geriatrics and psycho-geriatrics, maximize offers of employment, and increase hospital space for other non-Veteran patients. The Government's priority is to ensure that eligible Veterans have priority access to Ste. Anne's Hospital and to exceptional care and services in the official language of their choice. Under no circumstances will the level of care be compromised. **How VAC plans to meet this priority** 〉 Continuing negotiations with the Province of Quebec, with the goal of reaching an agreement for the Hospital transfer later in 2013. 〉 Ensuring that key considerations are met: that Veterans will have priority access to care and services, and that the interests of Hospital employees (including both Veterans' and employees' ability to operate in the official language of their choice) are taken into account. 〉 Communicating with Veterans, employees and other key stakeholders to keep them informed of the process. 〉 Maximizing the capacity of Ste. Anne's Hospital, so that it can continue to provide care and services, and maintaining its staff expertise.

Workplace Renewal	**Previously Committed in 2012–2013**
Contributing to: All strategic outcomes PA(s) ▪ Internal Services	**Why is this a priority?** In order to modernize its workplace, the Department must create an environment that encourages and supports its staff, and also aligns them with Veteran demographics. VAC will also continue to enhance Veterans' opportunities to obtain positions in the public service. **How VAC plans to meet this priority** 〉 Exploring mechanisms (along with the Public Service Commission and other stakeholders) for Veterans to join the public service. 〉 Changing VAC's culture, with the goal of both improving service to Veterans and improving the workplace for VAC staff. 〉 Modernizing technology to provide employees with the tools they need in order to ensure effective and efficient service to Veterans. 〉 Realigning VAC's human resources with other factors: changing Veteran demographics, IT advancements, and policies and processes. 〉 Managing the Department's workforce through the transformation process. 〉 Digitizing reference documents and subject records, so that authorized staff members can quickly access information in one central source to ensure faster service to Veterans. 〉 Collaborating with the Treasury Board Secretariat and other departments, to pilot an electronic content management system. 〉 Providing a suite of tools, tips and services to support employees in their daily tasks. 〉 Introducing a "suggestions program" to gain new ideas about how to streamline processes. 〉 Continuing with training and awareness for employees regarding the protection of Veteran's privacy, and the implementation of the Privacy Action Plan 2.0.

Commemoration of Canadian Veterans and those Who Died in Service to Canada	**New in 2013-2014**
Contributing to: Strategic Outcome 2 PA(s) ▪ Canada Remembers Program	**Why is this a priority?** VAC exists to pay the debt of a grateful nation to those who have protected Canadian values in times of war, military conflict and peace. Part of that debt includes commemoration. Veterans, both traditional and modern-day, are direct links to our history and the Canadian identity. We must honour them and preserve their legacy. **How VAC plans to meet this priority** Annually identifying and commemorating Veterans, in general, and in the context of significant military events in Canadian history. In 2013–14 this includes: 〉 Initiatives to mark the 60th anniversary of the Korean War Armistice and the Year of the Korean War Veteran.

	〉 Expansion of activities commemorating post-Korean War missions of the Canadian Armed Forces. In addition, planning and preparation for the 100th anniversary of the First World War and the 75th anniversary of the Second World War, both of which will begin in 2014.

Office of the Veterans Ombudsman

Advance the Fair Treatment of the Veteran Community	**Ongoing since 2009**
Contributing to: Strategic Outcome 3 PA(s) ▪ Veterans Ombudsman	**Why is this a priority?** The Office of the Veterans Ombudsman (OVO) acts as an independent voice for all those served by the Department: Veterans, those still in uniform, and their families. Its mandate is to uphold the rights articulated in the *Veterans Bill of Rights*. The Office is committed to ensuring that these people are treated fairly in any dispute with VAC, and also to measuring the outcomes of its interventions. The Office views fairness as an outcome that can be objectively measured in terms of the adequacy, sufficiency and accessibility of the benefits and services in place to address their needs. **How OVO plans to meet this priority** 〉 Intervening early in matters brought to the attention of the OVO, so that any complaints, information requests and referrals are resolved in a timely manner. 〉 Investigating any emerging and systemic issues involving Veterans, and helping to resolve them. 〉 Initiating public consultation approaches—including online forums, town-hall meetings, and speaking platforms—to engage the people that VAC serves in discussions about issues and priorities.

Risk Analysis

Operating Environment

Veterans Affairs Canada continues to transform the way it does business. The Department's changes so far have been well received by those concerned, and the modernization will continue into 2013–2014. A major driver for renewal is the changing demographics of those the Department serves, along with their changing expectations.

Demographic Trends

The overall number of people VAC serves is declining. While the number of Canadian Armed Forces Veterans is slowly increasing, the number of older traditional Veterans is decreasing much more rapidly. The Department is investing in training to ensure that its staff has the skills necessary to meet the complex needs of younger, modern-day Veterans.

Service Expectations

Over the past year, VAC has carried out many activities aimed at better understanding the needs and concerns of Veterans, men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces, and their families. These activities focused on outreach and engaging stakeholders, and were supported by Veterans and their organizations. Initiatives included:

- "Cutting Red Tape;"
- enhancements to the New Veterans Charter (NVC);
- improvements to the Veterans Independence Program (VIP);
- strengthening the privacy policy.

These have been well received, and VAC plans to maintain this momentum in 2013–2014. The Department will also introduce more changes in service delivery, including:

- further expansion of *My VAC Account*;
- ongoing quality and more timely decisions on disability benefits (within 12 weeks);
- continuing to improve the *Veterans Benefits Browser*.

VAC Workforce

Along with other Government of Canada departments, VAC has completed a strategic operating review, enabling it to realize savings through operational efficiencies. The Department will strive to eliminate unnecessary steps and layers of bureaucracy, in order to deliver better and faster service. These reductions, combined with the Department's ongoing transformation, which began in 2010, will be managed through attrition: approximately 1,000 VAC employees (almost a third of its workforce) were or/are eligible to retire between 2010 and 2016. Other strategies will include the internal redeployment of staff resources, and workforce adjustment as necessary.

Notably, there will be no reduction in services to Veterans, in particular, the Department's case management services, which provide care and support to the Veterans in greatest need. VAC will continue to improve these services, while striving to balance workloads for case managers. The Department will maintain a ratio of one case manager for every 40 case managed Veterans.

Risks

Since well-managed risks usually create opportunities, VAC has a strategy that underpins its decision making: Integrated Risk Management (IRM). This program identifies corporate risks on a quarterly basis, allowing senior managers to consider the implications of their decisions before proceeding. The managers address challenges in light of VAC's current priorities, its internal context, and its external environment. These challenges help to set future priorities. The Department also conducts an annual environmental scan to identify areas of interest. VAC will continue to assess and monitor any significant risks to the task of modernizing the Department.

Services and Programs

To ensure that its programs and services meet the evolving needs of Veterans, their families and others, VAC continually reviews its business processes with an eye to both managing risk, and improving the effectiveness of its delivery of services and benefits. The Department also continues to strengthen its activities in terms of:

- outreach and consultation;
- employee training;
- increasing technological capacity, e.g. the *Veterans Benefits Browser.*

These help it to identify the needs of Veterans, and to build better relationships with partners and stakeholders.

Managing Change

The Department has recently undergone a culture shift in terms of risk-based decision making. This has resulted in a number of improvements, such as:

- enhanced engagement by all levels of staff, including senior management;
- improved alignment with planning and reporting requirements;
- a special unit designed to provide strategic advice, and to integrate risk management into all aspects of VAC's planning activities.

VAC has also made a significant investment in education, to ensure that its staff members are appropriately trained in risk management, and are given opportunities to develop their skills.

Planning Summary

The following table presents the Department's planned financial and human resources for the next three fiscal years.

Financial and Human Resources
($ millions)

Financial Resources

Financial Resources ($ millions)

	Total Budgetary Expenditures Main Estimates 2013-14	Planned Spending			FTE's		
		2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Veterans Affairs Canada	3,632.0	3,643.6	3,538.4	3,511.2	3,115	2,796	2,755
Office of the Veterans Ombudsman	5.9	6.1	5.8	5.8	38.0	38.0	38.0

Planning Summary Total

Financial Resources ($ millions)

Strategic Outcomes and Internal Services	*Actual 2010-11	*Actual 2011-12	Forecast Spending 2012-13	Planned Spending			FTE's		
				2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Departmental Total	3,503.3	3,497.1	3,518.8	3,649.7	3,544.2	3,517.0	3,153.0	2,834.0	2,793.0

*VAC has had major changes to its PAA structure over the last three years and cannot provide actual expenditures at the Program level for 2010-11 and 2011-12
Note: Above figures include Sainte Anne's Hospital notwithstanding its planned transfer in 2013.

Performance Summary Tables by Strategic Outcome

Strategic Outcome 1	Financial, physical and mental well-being of eligible Veterans				
Program Activity	**Forecast Spending 2012–2013 ($ millions)**	**Planned Spending ($ millions)**			**Alignment to Government of Canada Outcomes**
		2013–2014	**2014–2015**	**2015–2016**	
Disability and Death Compensation	2,159.3	2,220.9	2,183.4	2,171.7	Income Security and Employment for Canadians[iv]

This program is delivered through grants and operating funds, representing over 60% of total departmental planned spending. Over the three-year planning horizon, planned spending in the Disability and Death Compensation program shows an overall increase of $12.4 million (less than 1%) in 2015-2016 when compared to 2012-2013 forecasted spending. This increase is the result of a continued increase in the number of modern-day Veterans benefiting from the New Veterans Charter programs, partially offset by a reduction in the number of traditional Veterans accessing some of the Department's traditional programs. This is due to the sad reality that, at an average age of 88, traditional war service Veterans are passing away.

The above noted figures also include savings relating to the implementation of Budget 2012, which have no impact on Veterans benefits and services. Rather these savings will be achieved through various efficiencies in operations.

Financial Support Program	122.0	157.0	174.2	191.8	Income Security and Employment for Canadians[v]

This program is delivered through grants and operating funds. Over the three-year planning horizon, planned spending in the Financial Support Program shows a steady increase in funding. By 2015–2016, this increase amounts to $69.8 million when compared to 2012–2013, primarily due to an increase in uptake of New Veterans Charter programs, such as the Earnings Loss and Supplementary Retirement Benefits and the Canadian Forces Income Support Allowance programs.

Health Care Program and Re-establishment Services	1,115.4	1,152.2	1,080.1	1,049.3	Healthy Canadians[vi]

This program is delivered through grants, contributions and operating funds, where funding fluctuates over the three-year planning horizon. This fluctuation is due to the combination of increased spending in New Veterans Charter programs, offset by decreased spending in some of the Department's more traditional grant and contribution programs. The above noted figures include savings relating to the implementation of Budget 2012 savings, will have no impact on Veterans benefits and services. Savings relate to administrative efficiencies and the elimination of duplication and overlap in programming between Veterans Affairs Canada and the Department of National Defence.

Total for SO1	**3,396.7**	**3,530.2**	**3,437.7**	**3,412.8**

Strategic Outcome 2

Canadians remember and demonstrate their recognition of all who served in Canada's efforts during war, military conflict and peace

Program Activity	Forecast Spending 2012–2013 ($ millions)	Planned Spending ($ millions)			Alignment to Government of Canada Outcomes
		2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	
Canada Remembers Program	43.5	43.4	40.6	39.9	A Vibrant Canadian Culture and Heritage[vii]

This program is delivered through grants, contributions and operating funds. Over the three-year planning horizon, planned spending in the Canada Remembers Program is relatively stable with a slight reduction in 2014–2015 due to the cessation of funding for external advertising projects and the implementation of Budget 2012 savings, which are the result of efficiencies in operations.

Total for SO2	**43.5**	**43.4**	**40.6**	**39.9**

Strategic Outcome 3

Veteran's rights to services and benefits that address their needs are considered by the Veterans Affairs Portfolio

Program Activity	Forecast Spending 2012–2013 ($ millions)	Planned Spending ($ millions)			Alignment to Government of Canada Outcomes
		2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	
Veterans Ombudsman	6.0	6.1	5.8	5.8	Income Security and Employment for Canadians[viii]

This program is delivered through operating funds. Over the three-year planning horizon, planned spending is stable with a modest decrease of less than $200 thousand when compared to the 2012–2013 forecasted spending. This decrease is related to the implementation of Budget 2012 savings to be realized through various efficiencies in operations.

Total for SO3	**6.0**	**6.1**	**5.8**	**5.8**

Program Activity Supporting all Strategic Outcomes

Program Activity	Forecast Spending 2012–2013 ($ millions)	Planned Spending ($ millions)			Alignment to Government of Canada Outcomes
		2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	
Internal Services	72.6	70	60.1	58.5	

This program is delivered through operating funds. Over the three-year planning horizon, Internal Services planned spending reduces by $14.1 million in 2015–2016 when compared to 2012–2013 forecasted spending. This decrease relates to the implementation of Budget 2012 savings and the implementation of the Minister of Veterans Affairs' Cutting Red Tape initiative. These savings relate solely to efficiencies in operations.

Total	**72.6**	**70**	**60.1**	**58.5**

** Totals may not add due to rounding

Contribution to the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy

The Federal Sustainable Development Strategy (FSDS) outlines the Government of Canada's commitment to improving the transparency of environmental decision making by articulating its key strategic environmental goals and targets. The government will be consulting the public in 2013–2014 regarding the second three-year cycle of the FSDS (2013–2016). The 2013–2016 FSDS will be finalized in 2013–2014. It will be presented as part of year-end performance reporting for 2013–2014.

Veterans Affairs Canada ensures that consideration of these outcomes is an integral part of its decision-making processes. In particular, through the federal Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process, any new policy, plan, or program initiative includes an analysis of its impact on attaining the FSDS goals and targets. The results of SEAs are made public when an initiative is announced, demonstrating the Department's commitment to achieving the FSDS goals and targets.

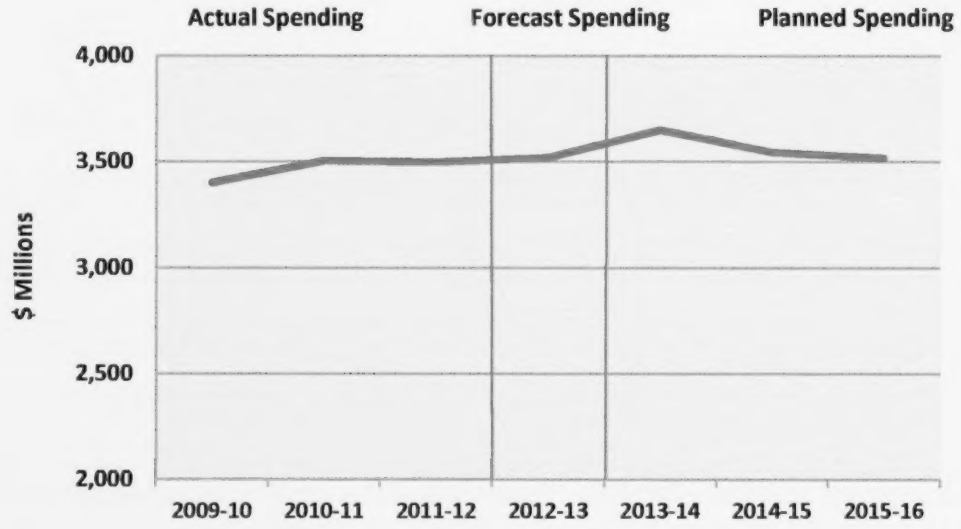
Veterans Affairs Canada contributes to *Theme IV – Shrinking the Environmental Footprint – Beginning with Government* as denoted by the visual identifier below.

Theme IV:
Shrinking the Environmental Footprint –
Beginning with Government

These contributions are made through the Internal Services Program Activity and are further explained in Section II. For additional details on Veterans Affairs Canada's activities to support sustainable development, please see Section II of this RPP and our departmental website[iv]. For complete details on the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy, please see the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy website[v].

Expenditure Profile

Departmental Spending Trend ($ millions)



Veterans Affairs Canada's total planned spending for the 2013–14 fiscal year is $3,649.7 million. The majority of planned spending will be used to meet the expected results of the three strategic outcomes with only 1.9% being allocated to Internal Services. Decreases in planned spending over the following two years will have no impact on benefits and services for Veterans, but rather is the function of the sad reality that, at an average age of 88, traditional war service Veterans are passing away.

The Department continues to see an increase in the number of modern-day Veterans benefiting from the New Veterans Charter programs. However, this group is not growing at the same rate as the reduction in traditional Veterans.

In addition, although funding for benefits and services to Veterans is increasing, operating costs to run the Department are decreasing in response to key activities such as the Minister of Veterans Affairs' Cutting Red Tape initiative and the implementation of Budget 2012 decisions ($15.9 million in fiscal year 2013–14). These decisions re-confirm the Government of Canada's support to Veterans by maintaining the level of benefits, while recognizing the need to modernize the Department and transform the way it does business. Together, these two initiatives are enabling the Department to provide better service to Veterans, while reducing administrative costs.

Voted and Statutory Items

For information on organizational appropriations, see the 2013–2014 Main Estimates publication[vi].

Section II: Analysis of Program Activities by Strategic Outcome

This section provides information on all the Department's program activities, and outlines how these support VAC's strategic outcomes (SOs). Each SO includes an overview of planned spending, performance information, and planning highlights for all program activities.

Strategic Outcome 1 — Financial, physical and mental well-being of eligible Veterans

Program Activities

Disability and Death Compensation	Financial Support Program	Health Care Program and Re-establishment Services

Veterans Affairs Canada assists and helps the men and women who have proudly served Canada in times of war, conflict and peace.

To ensure their continued well-being after release, VAC provides access to a full range of programs and services designed to meet their medical, psycho-social, vocational and financial needs. These programs include: Disability Benefits, Financial Benefits, Health Care Benefits, the Veterans Independence Program, Rehabilitation Services and Vocational Assistance, and Career Transition Services.

The Department contributes to the well-being of Veterans by:

- maintaining departmental programs and services that respond to the needs of Veterans and their families;
- Conducting and partnering on projects that support advancement in areas such as mental health and research;
- partnering with the Canadian Armed Forces on various initiatives such as integrated personnel support centres and other initiatives that support transition from military to civilian life;
- strengthening outreach, engagement and consultation efforts with Veterans' Organizations and other stakeholders to better serve men and women in uniform of the Canadian Armed Forces, and Veterans; and
- exploring and developing opportunities to work with the private sector, including not-for-profit organizations, to help connect Veterans with civilian jobs after their release from the Canadian Armed Forces.

Year	Financial Resources ($ millions)	Human Resources (FTEs)
2013–2014	3,530.2	2,312
2014–2015	3,437.7	2,064
2015–2016	3,412.8	2,053

2013-14 (Total Budgetary Expenditures Main Estimates) 3,524.3

SO1 Planning Highlights

- Re-engineering policies and processes to reduce complexity, and to make decision making easier.
- Reducing the time required to render appropriate decisions on first application.
- Allowing Veterans easier and faster access to health benefits.
- Consulting with Veterans to better understand their needs, and better respond to them.
- Revising the Department's mental health strategy.
- Creating strong partnerships to enhance health care capacity.
- Enhancing VAC's case management delivery through a variety of strategies:
  - clarifying the roles and responsibilities of those positions that support service delivery;
  - developing improved standards and tools to enhance service delivery;
  - implementing a national case management learning program to better equip those delivering services;
  - establishing competency profiles for key positions in service delivery;
  - developing a comprehensive quality management framework for case management.

Program Activity 1.1: Disability and Death Compensation

Sub-Activities

- Disability Pension Program
- Disability Award Program

This program supports eligible Veterans, Canadian Armed Forces Veterans and members, survivors, spouses/common-law partners, dependents and civilians whose lives have been permanently affected as a result of service to their country. In recognition of the effects of service-related disabilities or death, compensation is provided in the form of monthly disability pensions, lump-sum disability awards and/or monthly allowances.

The amount of benefit awarded is dependent on the severity of the disability and its impact on daily functioning.

This program is delivered through grants.

Program Activity Disability and Death Compensation

Human Resources (FTEs) and Planned Spending ($ millions)

2013–2014		2014–2015		2015–2016	
FTEs	**Planned Spending**	**FTEs**	**Planned Spending**	**FTEs**	**Planned Spending**
686	2,220.9	582	2,183.4	578	2,171.7

2013-14 (Total Budgetary Expenditures Main Estimates) 2,218.9

Expected Results	Performance Indicators	Targets
Eligible Veterans service-related disabilities are recognized.	Percentage of disability benefits first applications that result in a favourable decision.	**65%**

(FTEs = Full-Time Equivalents)

Planning Highlights

Redesigning the First Application Process

VAC will continue to implement the results of its "business process redesign," in order to streamline the process of a first application for disability benefits. The result will be a more efficient system that improves service by maximizing the use of technology. This will better support VAC's staff members in performing their jobs, by giving them more current information and tools.

Providing Faster Access to Benefits

The new "hi-tech" process will remove internal complexity and leverage partnerships, in order to improve the time required to render appropriate decisions on first applications. Further enhancements include the online *My VAC Account* tool, which will make online access to services easier.

Improving Disability Letters

Building on the success of the initial phase of this initiative, VAC will continue to rewrite its disability letters to make them clearer and easier to understand.

Renewing Policies

The Department will continue to simplify its existing policies and processes. This will help with better decision making, and with improving the quality and timeliness of services.

Program Activity 1.2: Financial Support Program

Sub-Activities

- Financial Benefits
- War Veterans Allowance

This program provides income support to eligible Veterans, qualified civilians and their survivors. The intent of the support is to ensure that recipients have income which is adequate to meet their basic needs. In recognition of the effects of war time service in the case of war service Veterans, income support may be paid in the form of a monthly War Veterans Allowance. The program also provides economic support to Canadian Armed Forces Veterans, survivors, spouses/common-law partners and dependents for the economic impact that a career ending and/or service-related injury or death can have on a Veteran's ability to earn income, advance in a career or save for retirement.

Compensation is provided in the form of a monthly income support payment. A lump-sum supplementary retirement benefit is available to those who are totally and permanently incapacitated. There is also an allowance available for those with severe and permanent impairments.

This program is delivered through grants.

Program Activity Financial Support Program

Human Resources (FTEs) and Planned spending ($ millions)

2013–2014		2014–2015		2015–2016	
FTEs	**Planned Spending**	**FTEs**	**Planned Spending**	**FTEs**	**Planned Spending**
46	157.0	39	174.2	38	191.8

2013-14 (Total Budgetary Expenditures Main Estimates) 156.9

Expected Results	Performance Indicators	Targets
The income of eligible Veterans is sufficient to meet their basic needs.	The percentage of earnings loss recipients whose family income is above the low-income measure.	**90%**

(FTEs = Full-Time Equivalents)

Planning Highlights

Disability Pension Offset

After October 2012, the Disability Pension is no longer considered an offset when calculating the Earnings Loss (EL) Benefit or the Canadian Forces Income Support (CFIS) Benefit. As a result, there is an increase in the financial support to recipients of EL or CFIS who are also receiving a Disability Pension.

Financial benefit applications impacted by this change are being reviewed and reassessed to ensure that recipients receive the financial support available to them.

Creating Online Support Videos

VAC is creating a two-part video series that will guide Veterans through the process of completing the Earnings Loss Benefit application. The first video provides basic information about the program, while the second is a step-by-step process showing how to complete the application. Once completed, the videos will be available on the VAC website.

Improving Communication

The Department will continue to enhance the ways it communicates information about financial benefits. Training sessions will be offered to service delivery staff, to ensure that they have the knowledge they need to respond to inquiries from Veterans and other people the Department serves. As well, specialist support will be made available for complex issues such as Earnings Loss Benefit calculations.

Renewing Policies

The Department will continue to simplify its existing policies and processes. This will help with better decision making, and with improving the quality and timeliness of services.

Program Activity 1.3: Health Care Program and Re-establishment Services

Sub-Activities

- Rehabilitation
- Career Transition Services
- Health Care Benefits
- Veterans Independence Program
- Intermediate and Long-Term Care
- Ste. Anne's Hospital

This program is designed to maintain or enhance the physical, mental and social well-being of eligible Veterans, Canadian Armed Forces members, civilians, and their survivors and dependants and other individuals, promote independence, and assist in keeping them at home and in their own communities by providing a continuum of care. The program provides access to employment support, health benefits, home care and long-term care.

The program is delivered through operating funds and contributions.

Program Activity Health Care Program and Re-establishment Services

Human Resources (FTEs) and Planned Spending ($ millions)

2013–2014		2014–2015		2015–2016	
FTEs	**Planned Spending**	**FTEs**	**Planned Spending**	**FTEs**	**Planned Spending**
1,580	1,152.2	1,443	1,081.1	1,437	1,049.3

2013–14 (Total Budgetary Expenditures Main Estimates) 1,148.5

Expected Results	Performance Indicators	Targets
Eligible Veterans are able to remain in their own homes and communities.	The percentage of Veterans in receipt of the Veterans Independence Program who remain in their homes.	**90%**
Payments for health care/treatment benefits are processed in an efficient manner that reduces financial burden on Veterans.	The percentage of payments processed for health care benefits that are paid directly to service providers.	**70%**
Eligible Veterans actively participate in the civilian workforce.	The percentage of eligible Canadian Armed Forces Veterans who are employed.[1]	**86%**

(FTEs = Full-Time Equivalents)

[1] Employment rate experienced by all CAF Veterans released from service between 1998 and 2007.

Planning Highlights

Redesigning Programs

The Department will continue to modernize the business processes for two programs: Treatment Benefits, and Veterans Independence. This will ensure that Veterans and their families receive the most efficient service. Enhancements to the programs and streamlining processes will reduce the administrative burden on Veterans. A useful tool connected to the redesign will be the recently implemented technology for digital imaging and electronic forms.

Improving Communications

VAC will continue to improve the way Health Care Program information is communicated to Veterans and service providers.

Information on the Departmental website will be in plain language. Correspondence sent to recipients of services (including official decision letters and forms) will also be in plain language. These will be rewritten as necessary, to ensure that they are concise and easy to understand.

Establishing Partnerships in Mental Health

VAC will build strong partnerships with a range of organizations, such as the Canadian Mental Health Association, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), various professional associations, and universities. These partnerships will enable the Department to enhance community awareness of the needs of Veterans, and will also help Veterans to access community services. As well, the partnerships with universities will allow VAC to engage in knowledge exchange initiatives; and the HRSDC partnership will help address the needs of homeless Veterans.

Improving Technology

The Department will continue to improve its use of technology to deliver its programs more efficiently. The main areas of focus will be the abilities to use digital imaging to provide on-demand access to electronic records; and to track record information in the Client Service Delivery Network (CSDN), to help VAC consolidate its data and enhance statistical information about its programs. Digitization will allow VAC to offer more services online – including the convenience and flexibility of self –serve options via the My VAC Account. The Veterans Independence Program will also develop and enhance its online presence.

Developing New Service Standards

VAC will improve the way it delivers the Rehabilitation Services and Vocational Assistance Program, by ensuring that Veterans and staff clearly understand what can be expected. The Department will also upgrade its monitoring of this program.

Renewing Policies

The Department will continue to simplify its existing policies and processes. This will help with better decision making, and with improving the quality and timeliness of services.

Transferring Ste. Anne's Hospital

VAC will continue to lead the negotiations between the governments of Canada and Quebec regarding the transfer of Ste. Anne's. It is anticipated that a transfer agreement will be signed in 2013. Priority access to high quality care and services for Veterans, and the interest of employees and official languages will continue to be key considerations in discussions with the province.

Strategic Outcome 2 Canadians remember and demonstrate their recognition of all who served in Canada's efforts during war, military conflict and peace

Program Activity

Canada Remembers Program

Remembrance-based activities are a large part of VAC's mandate. The courage, determination and sacrifice of generations of Veterans is one reason that Canada is now a free and peaceful country. Remembering the contributions of Veterans depends on Canadians actively acknowledging their achievements and sacrifices.

Year	Financial Resources ($ millions)	Human Resources (FTEs)
2013–14	43.4	123
2014–15	40.6	121
2015–16	39.9	121

2013–14 (Total Budgetary Expenditures Main Estimates) 41.4

Remembrance activities are essential to ensure that future generations understand the high cost of freedom and the importance of protecting human rights, freedom and justice around the world.

VAC contributes to ongoing remembrance by:

- leading and supporting ceremonies and events in Canada and abroad that recognize and honour Canada's war dead and Veterans;
- providing remembrance-based resources (a wide range of learning materials using a variety of media) for Canadian youth and educators and interpreting war memorials in Europe and Canada;
- establishing and leveraging partnerships that extend the reach of Veterans Affairs Canada's remembrance activities;
- providing funeral, burial and grave marking assistance in partnership with the Last Post Fund Corporation; and
- maintaining war graves, Veterans' graves and memorials in Canada and worldwide on behalf of Canadians, in partnership with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and others.

SO2 Planning Highlights

- Increasing the participation of Canadians, especially youth, in remembrance activities—through learning resources, technology and community events.
- Marking the Year of the Korean War Veteran, both in Canada and overseas.
- Continuing plans to mark the Centennial of the First World War, and the 75th anniversary of the Second World War (2014–2020).
- Increasing recognition of the contributions of Canadian Armed Forces Veterans.
- Continuing to improve the business processes of the Partnerships Contribution Program, to enhance service delivery and strengthen partnerships.

Program Activity 2.1: Canada Remembers Program

Sub-Activities

- Public Education and Awareness
- Ceremonies and Events
- Partnerships and Collaborations
- Memorial and Cemetery Maintenance
- Funeral and Burial Program

Canadian Veterans and those who died in service to Canada have made valuable contributions to the development of Canada. Under the authority of P.C. Order 1965-688, this program ensures that Veterans and those who died in service are honoured and the memory of their sacrifices and achievements is preserved.

Canada Remembers activities promote the following outcomes: Canadians are knowledgeable about the efforts of Veterans and those who died in service to Canada; Veterans are publicly recognized for their service; symbols erected to their honour are maintained in perpetuity on behalf of Canadians; communities and other groups lead remembrance activities; and eligible Veterans receive funeral and burial assistance.

Encouraging pride in our shared military history, celebrating the contributions and acknowledging the sacrifices of those who served, and preserving symbols to mark their courage all contribute to the Government of Canada's outcome of a vibrant Canadian culture and heritage.

This program is delivered through grants, contributions and operating funds.

Program Activity Canada Remembers Program

Human Resources (FTEs) and Planned Spending ($ millions)

2013–2014		2014–2015		2015–2016	
FTEs	Planned Spending	FTEs	Planned Spending	FTEs	Planned Spending
123	43.4	121	40.6	121	39.9

Expected Results	Performance Indicators	Targets
Canadian Veterans and those who died in service are honoured and the memory of their achievements and sacrifices is preserved.	The percentage of Canadians who feel that VAC's remembrance program effectively honours Veterans and preserves the memory of their achievements and sacrifices.	**70%**

Planning Highlights

Commemorating Military Accomplishments

As 2013 is the Year of the Korean War Veteran, VAC has many commemorative plans to mark Canada's role in the war. Some of these plans focus on Veterans' Week (Nov. 5 to 11).

- To mark the 60th anniversary of the Korean War Armistice in July 2013, the Minister will lead an overseas event.
- VAC will develop an educational DVD about the Korean War in general, plus two other historical products that focus on specific engagements: the Battle of Kapyong and the Battle of Hill 355.
- VAC will lead a ceremony at the National War Memorial in Ottawa.
- The Department will provide support for the Korean War Veterans Association's ceremonies, at the Wall of Remembrance in Brampton, Ontario, and in British Columbia.
- To commemorate the post-Korean missions of the Canadian Armed Forces, the Department will release a "Canadian Armed Forces Around the World" learning kit. Its goal is to increase awareness of the legacy of Canadian Veterans.
- VAC will mark the 70th anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic on May 5, 2013.
- For 2014, the Department is already planning to mark the centennial of the beginning of the First World War, and the 75th anniversary of the beginning of the Second World War.
- Commemorative events, involving many national and international partners, will take place; some will continue until 2020.

Engaging Youth via Technology

The Department will continue to find strategies to engage Canadians, especially youth, through the use of technology. Initiatives include upgrading the VAC website, the "virtual poppy," remembrance-themed apps, and Quick Response (QR) codes that

link users to Veterans' Week learning materials on VAC's website. VAC will also continue to develop social media tools such as Facebook, YouTube, Twibbon and Twitter.

VAC will continue to hire youth guides to deliver interpretive programming at its First World War overseas sites: the Canadian National Vimy Memorial and the Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial. Young people who have worked at these sites have noted that they are touched by their experiences, and return home as ambassadors for remembrance activities.

Funding Partnerships

Remembrance, by its very nature, cannot be effective in isolation; and VAC continues to use partnerships to expand its reach.

In June 2013, the Community Engagement Partnership Fund will implement new lead time requirements for applications. This will ensure that expectations are clear, and will provide better service to applicants of the funding program. A clear deadline will help ensure applicants understand what they need to do to ensure they received timely service.

Maintaining Memorials and Cemeteries

VAC will continue to maintain and improve its memorials, cemeteries and grave markers, both in Canada and overseas, to honour the sacrifices and achievements of those who died in service. In this task, VAC makes the best strategic use of its available resources.

Strategic Outcome 3 Veteran's rights to services and benefits that address their needs are considered by the Veterans Affairs Portfolio.

Program Activity

Veterans Ombudsman

The Office of the Veterans Ombudsman (OVO) works to ensure that Veterans, men and women in uniform of the Canadian Armed Forces, members and former members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), as well as families and other individuals served by Veterans Affairs Canada, are treated respectfully, according to the *Veterans Bill of Rights*; and receive the services and benefits they need in a fair and timely manner.

Year	Financial Resources ($ millions)	Human Resources (FTEs)[2]
2013–2014	6.1	38
2014–2015	5.8	38
2015–2016	5.8	38

2013–14 (Total Budgetary Expenditures Main Estimates) 5.9

The OVO addresses complaints, emerging issues and systemic problems related to programs and services provided or administered by VAC, and those related to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board (VRAB).

More broadly, the OVO plays an important role in expanding awareness of Veterans' needs and the contributions they continue to make to Canadian society when they return to civilian life.

The Veterans Ombudsman has the following mandate:

- Review and address complaints arising from the application of the provisions of the *Veterans Bill of Rights*;
- Review and address complaints related to programs and services provided or administered by the Department or by third parties on the Department's behalf, including individual decisions on benefits and services for which there is no right of appeal to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board;
- Identify, research and investigate emerging and existing systemic issues related to the provisions of the Department's programs and services;
- Review systemic issues related to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board; and
- Provide information and recommendations to the Minister in relation to identified systemic issues.

[2] *Includes 10 VAC positions that provide support to the OVO and $1.3M to VAC for corporate support services*

SO3 Planning Highlights

- Ensuring the fair treatment of Veterans, men and women serving in the Canadian Armed Forces, members and former members of the RCMP, and their families. Reviewing and addressing complaints arising from the application of the *Veterans Bill of Rights*, as well as individual decisions on programs and services.
- Facilitating access to VAC programs and services.
- Providing awareness, and opportunities for consultations with Veterans and with the public.

Program Activity 3.1: Veterans Ombudsman

This program provides an independent and impartial opportunity to review complaints submitted by Veterans and other individuals (war service Veterans, Veterans and men and women in uniform of the Canadian Armed Forces (Regular and Reserve), members and former members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, spouses, common-law partners, survivors and primary caregivers, other eligible dependants and family members, other eligible individuals and representatives of the aforementioned groups).

It promotes fair and equitable treatment in accessing the services, benefits and programs from Veterans Affairs Canada. This is accomplished by: providing them with information and referrals to facilitate their access to programs and services; reviewing and addressing complaints arising from the *Veterans Bill of Rights* and decisions on benefits and services for which there is no right to appeal to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board; reviewing systemic issues related to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board; and identifying and reviewing emerging and systemic issues related to the provisions of the Department's programs and services and providing information and recommendations to the Minister in relation to those issues.

This program is delivered through operating funds.

Program Activity Veterans Ombudsman

Human Resources (FTEs) and Planned Spending ($ millions)

2013–2014		2014–2015		2015–2016	
FTEs	Planned Spending	FTEs	Planned Spending	FTEs	Planned Spending
38	6.1	38	5.8	38[3]	5.8

Expected Results	Performance Indicators	Targets
The needs of Veterans and others are addressed through Veterans Affairs Canada's programs and services.	The percentage of issues raised by Veterans and others that are being addressed by the OVO.	**80%**
	The percentage of recommendations raised by the OVO that are accepted by Veterans Affairs Canada.	**80%**

(FTEs = Full-Time Equivalents.)

Planning Highlights

Intervening Early

The Office of the Veterans Ombudsman will continue to provide direct assistance through early intervention activities. This will allow complaints, information requests and referrals to be resolved in a timely and appropriate manner.

Investigating Issues

The OVO will focus on investigating emerging and systemic issues. It will also assess any complex problems, and contribute to their resolution.

Consulting with the Public

Public consultation initiatives—such as online forums, town-hall meetings, and speaking platforms—allow the OVO to engage with Veterans on any issues of concern. The Office will also continue to work with the Ombudsman Advisory Committee to further promote the well- being of Veterans.

[3] *These figures include 10 VAC positions that provide support to the OVO.*

Program Activity 4.1: Internal Services

Sub-Activities

- Governance and Management Support
- Resource Management Services
- Asset Management Services

Internal Services are groups of related activities and resources that support the needs of programs and other corporate obligations of an organization. These groups are: Management and Oversight Services; Communications Services; Legal Services; Human Resources Management Services; Financial Management Services; Information Management Services; Information Technology Services; Real Property Services; Materiel Services; Acquisition Services; and Travel and Other Administrative Services.

Internal Services include only those activities and resources that apply across an organization and not to those provided specifically to a program.

Program Activity Internal Services

Human Resources (FTEs) and Planned Spending ($ millions)

2013–2014		2014–2015		2015–2016	
FTEs	**Planned Spending**	**FTEs**	**Planned Spending**	**FTEs**	**Planned Spending**
680	70.0	611	60.1	581	58.5

2013–14 (Total Budgetary Expenditures Main Estimates) 66.3

(FTEs = Full-Time Equivalents)

Planning Highlights

Delivering Internal Services

The Department will continue to deliver services in a way that reduces duplication and increases efficiency. This delivery model is grounded in the strategy of Common Business Processes, which all government departments aim to follow.

VAC will also continue to find efficiencies in its internal operations through effective workforce management. A variety of positions will be reduced through attrition, and redeployment or reassignment of staff. Only as a last resort will workforce adjustment be implemented.

Although the Department has transferred responsibility for e-mail, network and data centres to Shared Services Canada (SSC), in response to the recommendations of the Administrative Services Review, it will continue to work collaboratively with SSC to streamline delivery of IT infrastructure services.

Investing in the Workforce

To ensure that VAC is well positioned for the future, the Department will provide opportunities for its employees to enhance their present skills and learn new ones; and to have access to the tools they need to work efficiently. The Department will also continue to simplify its policies and processes, and advance its use of IT.

Implementing the Privacy Action Plan

VAC will continue with the second phase of its privacy action plan, in response to the need to protect all levels of information. Building on the success of the first phase, the plan aims to integrate privacy protection into the Department's management framework.

As well, VAC will continue to institute the changes required by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, in its audit report *An Examination of Veterans Affairs Canada*. As a result, VAC's Management Action Plan calls for changes to the Client Service Delivery Network by September 2013, to ensure that consent is accurately reflected. This supports the new policy on the use of privacy notices and consent.

The Department will continue its work on retention and disposition of records. The goal is to complete the appropriate disposal of all electronic and paper records by March 2015.

Updating Audits and Evaluations

Every year, VAC's Audit and Evaluation Division updates its multi-year, risk-based plans. These internal audits and program evaluations give management objective information to help improve programs and services, in line with the Department's organizational priorities.

Information Technology

VAC will continue to modernize the technology it uses. Some of these changes will allow VAC employees to access VAC's information systems remotely, resulting in anytime, anywhere support to Veterans. These changes will enable VAC to rapidly set up new service sites to align the organization with changing demographics while minimizing implementation and maintenance costs. This will result in better services to Veterans.

Other upgrades will include changes to existing systems to allow the Department to work more effectively with third-party service providers and other government departments. This change will help support overall decision making on benefits and services for Veterans and their families.

Revising the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy

VAC participates in the government-wide Federal Sustainable Development Strategy (FSDS), an initiative designed to make environmental decision making more accountable. It contributes to the targets of the "Greening Government Operations" strategy through its Internal Services program activity. VAC's own targets will be revised as part of the second cycle of the FSDS; and the Department will contribute to "Waste and Asset Management" goals through these strategies:

- Greener buildings: giving VAC properties a smaller energy footprint.
- Integrating environmental considerations into policies and practices.
- Reducing the number of copies of forms, reports, etc., that are printed.
- Increasing population density in offices.
- Minimizing IT assets per employee.
- Holding greener meetings, with less waste of resources.
- Reducing, re-using and recycling workplace assets.
- Engaging employees in sustainable workplace practices.

(For more details on VAC's Greening Government Operations activities, visit Section III: Supplementary Information tables.)

Section III: Supplementary Information

Financial Highlights

The future-oriented financial highlights presented within this *2013–14 Report on Plans and Priorities* are intended to serve as a general overview of Veterans Affairs Canada's financial position and operations. These financial highlights are prepared on an accrual basis to strengthen accountability and improve transparency and financial management. Future-oriented financial statements can be found on VAC's website[vii].

The variance between the figures that follow and the planned spending amounts provided in other sections of this report relates to such items as services without charge received from other government departments, amortization of capital assets, and severance and vacation pay liability adjustments.

Future-Oriented Financial Statements

Veterans Affairs Canada

Condensed Future-oriented Statement of Operations and Departmental Net Financial Position (Unaudited)

For the Year Ended March 31

($) millions

	Change %	Estimated Results 2012-13	Planned Results 2013-14
Total expenses	4%	3,569	3,699
Total revenues	0%	-	-
Net cost of operations before government funding and transfers	4%	3,569	3,699
Departmental net financial position	-10%	78	70

Veterans Affairs Canada
Condensed Future-oriented Statement of Financial Position (Unaudited)
As at March 31
($) millions

	Change %	Estimated Results 2012-13	Planned Results 2013-14
Total net liabilities	0%	91	91
Total net financial assets	0%	67	67
Departmental net debt	0%	24	24
Total non-financial assets	-8%	102	94
Departmental net financial position	-10%	78	70

Condensed Statements of Financial Position and Operations

The projected decrease in the Department's Net Financial Position from 2012-13 to 2013-14 is attributable to accrual accounting adjustments - not a decrease in the Department's budget.

The estimated net cost of operations for 2013–2014 is $3,699.2 million. Approximately 90% of planned spending for 2013–14 is paid directly to or on behalf of the people VAC serves in the form of compensation and financial support, health care and commemoration.

For complete information on Veterans Affairs Canada's Financial Statements, please visit the Department's website[viii].

List of Supplementary Information Tables

The following supplementary information tables can be found on Veterans Affairs Canada's website[ix].

- Details on Transfer Payment Programs (TPP)
- Greening Government Operations
- Sources of Non-Respendable Revenue
- Internal Audits and Evaluations

Tax Expenditure and Evaluation Report

The tax system can be used to achieve public policy objectives through the application of special measures such as low tax rates, exemptions, deductions, deferrals and credits. The Department of Finance Canada publishes cost estimates and projections for these measures annually in the Tax Expenditures and Evaluations[x] publication. The tax measures presented in the Tax Expenditures and Evaluations publication are the sole responsibility of the Minister of Finance.

Section IV: Other Items of Interest

Organizational Contact Information

To ask questions about Veterans Affairs Canada, or any of its programs or services, call the General Enquiries phone line: **1-866-522-2122**.

To contact the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman, call **1-877-330-4343**.

Websites

The following sites give more detailed information on the material provided in this report.

Veterans Affairs Canada:
veterans.gc.ca

Office of the Veterans Ombudsman:
www.ombudsman-veterans.gc.ca

Publications

VAC produces a number of publications about its programs and services. Online versions of these are available on the Department's website: veterans.gc.ca

For more information about this report, contact:

Integrated Corporate Management Division
Veterans Affairs Canada
PO Box 7700
Charlottetown PE C1A 8M9
E-mail: plan@vac-acc.gc.ca

Endnotes

[i] The *Department of Veterans Affairs Act,* http://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/V-1/index.html
[ii] Canada Remembers Program, http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance
[iii] Veterans Bill of Rights, http://www.ombudsman-veterans.gc.ca/rights-droits-eng.cfm
[iv] Income Security and Employment for Canadians, http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/ppg-cpr/frame-cadre-eng.aspx
[v] ibid
[vi] Healthy Canadians, http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/ppg-cpr/frame-cadre-eng.aspx
[vii] A Vibrant Canadian Culture and Heritage, http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/ppg-cpr/frame-cadre-eng.aspx
[viii] Income Security and Employment for Canadians, http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/ppg-cpr/frame-cadre-eng.aspx
[ix] Departmental Website, http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/department/reports/sustain
[x] Sustainable Development Strategy Website, http://www.ec.gc.ca/dd-sd/
[xi] 2013-2014 Main Estimates Publication, http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/ems-sgd/esp-pbc/me-bpd-eng.asp
[xii] Future Oriented Financial Statements, http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/department/reports/future-oriented-financial-statements
[xiii] Veterans Affairs Financial Statements, http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/department/reports/departmental-financial-statements/2011-12
[xiv] Supplementary Information Tables, http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/department/reports/rpp/2013-2014/tables
[xv] Tax Expenditure and Evaluations, http://www.fin.gc.ca/purl/taxexp-eng.asp